

Counseling God's Way Leadership Seminar - Part 1

by Bob Hoekstra

Bob Hoekstra emphasizes the importance of counseling based on biblical principles and the role of the Lord as our ultimate Counselor in the Christian life.

Duration: 1:05:34

Scripture: Psalm 119:24-130, John 17:17

Topics: "Biblical Counseling", "Discipleship"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of counseling God's way, highlighting the distinctive stand of God's ordained counseling as found in His Word. It contrasts human counsel with God's counsel, emphasizing the need to prioritize God's wisdom over human wisdom. The sermon underscores the urgency for the church to align with God's counsel and the transformative power of His Word in counseling individuals towards discipleship.

Transcript

Well, counseling God's way kind of makes a distinctive stand. Counseling God's way. Counseling as God has ordained it and designed it in his word.

Every place you go on the planet, people are counseling one another, but of course, you most of the counsel that humankind is sharing in is human counsel, even humanistic counsel. Not a lot of difference between the two, except the humanism purposely concentrates on man as the source, man as the object, man as the sum and substance and all in all in the universe. And of course, we know better than that.

We know that that's the place reserved for God alone. And God has spoken much in his word about counseling. In fact, it's quite astounding to think that you can pick up this library of 66 books that we call the Bible and be holding in your hands the counsel of God.

What would God counsel on this and that and the other? Well, here it is. It's in here. Everything that pertains to life and godliness.

And I do believe that there is an urgency in the ministry of the church these days to reconsider what God has said in his word about counseling. The greatest error man can make in that arena is to overestimate his own ideas and to underestimate what God has already said. We can only but underestimate the word

of God.

But the more we're in it, the more we're growing in it, hearing from the Lord, the greater will our estimation of the word be. And we'll be getting closer and closer to the perspective God wants us to have. It can grow in a lifetime actually.

So, counseling God's way, wanting God to tell us what to counsel and how to counsel. And counseling is a ministry ordained of God for all Christians. Every person on earth, including everyone in the body of Christ, needs counsel throughout their lifetime.

You know, it needs direction and insight. And in God's plan, everyone in the family of God is actually commanded in the scriptures to counsel one another. That doesn't mean that will be our primary ministry necessarily.

It doesn't even mean that we will have a spiritual gift in that area as some do. But it is part of our general ministry in the body of Christ. And we'll see specific scriptures.

These are sort of conclusions my own heart has come to through the study of the word. And I share them as introduction for our study in the word. But I do believe that each of these remarks is going to be thoroughly validated by the perspective of the word of God.

This is not some theoretical counseling perspective that I have sort of accumulated in 41 years of ministry. Really, it's quite the contrary. It's things God has convinced me of.

And the further back you go, the more I needed convincing that God had His ways in all these issues of life. And I thank the Lord for convincing me of that. And I just want to grow in that perspective.

The one another ministries of the family of God, where one ministers to another and the other ministers to the one. And it's mutual and reciprocal. And it's from each one of us out to everyone that we get to know or meet or have access to.

That's the arena where the word of God emphasizes the counseling ministry of the believer. It's often a very spontaneous thing happening as you walk and as you talk and as you live. It doesn't have to be by appointment or by location.

It just needs to be by the spirit through the word. And most of us believers have counseled for many, many years and didn't even know we were doing it. It was just people coming to us for help.

So let's counsel. And God has the help. You might get a phone call or someone ask a question at the office or for those on campuses, a student walking along or after class raising questions of life and struggles and perplexities and all of a sudden you're the counselor.

And most of us live most of our lives in a family unit that God has put us into, made us a part of, maybe started out of our relationship of love and life in the Lord with our husband or wife. And what a huge arena, husbands and wives counseling one another. Sure, the husband learning to take a responsibility lead, but oh, nobody has it all together but God.

And who can help one another more and more rightly than godly, biblical Christian husbands and wives. And we have close friends. We have our children.

We have grandchildren. These are all fertile fields where the doors are open to us for counsel. And it's so spontaneous and God's plan a part of all of the life in Christ, it can just be happening everywhere you go, every day.

But the question will be, what kind of counsel are we giving? I still may have some of those old remnants of the early counseling days because it's a process. Growth and transformation is a process. We'd like it to be a snap the finger event, but it's called life.

And I had a very eclectic counseling approach when I was early on saved. Last week in 1965, three years later I was pastor of a group that grew right up in our living room, much to my amazement. And that little congregation, they're the ones who counseled me that God had called me to be a pastor.

They knew it before I did, but their counsel was accurate, I must say, much to my amazement. But I was an eclectic counselor, which means you grab anything you can from any place you can get it and hope it helps. I was as likely in those days to quote Reader's Digest as the Apostle Paul.

And if I couldn't think of either, I could always remember something Grandma said. Our morning is dedicated to counseling God's way. It's an important ministry.

The church is neglecting it. The salt and light in the church is losing its savor and its brightness. Consequently, the world is impacting the church more than the church is impacting the world, and this is backwards.

There may be very well-intended people out in the world with the world's theories of counseling, and many of them are very dedicated and sacrificial. But here's the great problem. The Lord is left out.

How could we even state the radical implications in that? Or the Lord is included just along with all the hodgepodge of human wisdom. God likes to change things like that. He wants to counsel us in His Word, and I pray He does that even today.

But He wants to also equip us to counsel in His Word, and He can be doing that today too. But also He wants to alert us, warn us about counsel that is other than His, and is counter to His, and therefore ends up counterproductive. Well, with that in mind, let's look at our first subject.

What counseling is? I do believe that Isaiah 9-6 is a tremendous place to start, very familiar verse to most Christians, and particularly at Christmas season of the year. Isaiah 9-6, For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God. This child born, this son given, is God the Son.

This is Mighty God, which is also true of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. But this is God the Son, and one of His title names is Wonderful Counselor. Your translation may have a comma there, may not.

Wonderful Counselor, or Wonderful, Comma, Counselor. Um, there were no punctuations in the Hebrew language, so any punctuation, they're the translators and editors just trying to help us sort out the pieces. But whether you have a comma there or not is immaterial.

His title name, Wonderful Counselor, it's either two names, He's Wonderful and He's Counselor, which means He's a Wonderful Counselor. Or, and I think this fits well because all these other statements are couplets, two terms brought together, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, that is one

with the Father, and Prince of Peace, or Father of Eternities, either one. What an insight on this subject.

In fact, I really believe you can rightly say a verse like this is the anchor point in Biblical thinking concerning counseling. Because it declares, it declares this great truth. The Lord is the Counselor.

How radical is that? The Lord is the Counselor. The degreed expert in the world is not the Counselor. The pastor or church leader in the church is not the Counselor.

When God is working His counsel in and through our lives, we are not the Counselors. In the kingdom of heaven, the Lord is the Counselor. See, this is the gulf between counseling man's way and counseling God's way.

In the world, man counsels man. In the kingdom of heaven, God counsels man. Now, how big a difference is that? Well, let me put it another way.

How big a difference in measure, magnitude, significance, impact, and import is there between God and man? This is a glorious truth. The Lord is the Counselor. For all those times through all these days, day after day that we need counsel, we actually have available to us the Lord Jesus Christ, the wonderful Counselor.

Any thinking on counseling that isn't anchored there is somehow less than what God has declared, less than what's available, and other than what He has on His mind. This is the glory of counseling God's way. Realizing in the Word that He's the Counselor, and then learning how to receive counsel from Him.

Then every bit of counsel we receive from Him is actually simultaneously equipping us to counsel others, because what God told us, everybody's going to need to hear sooner or later too. We're all much more alike than we are different, and we're very different. But we're much more alike.

You know, we all start out sinners, dead in trespasses and sins. We all have a common need of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then we have this common need, we all need to grow the rest of our days, the rest of the way, in the wisdom and counsel of the Lord.

Everybody else has that same need. These issues of life might come to us in a different sequence, or a different context or setting, but it's all the Lord's counsel, and we need all of it, and everybody else needs to be hearing it too. The Lord is the Counselor.

What a hope that gives. What a burden that takes off the shoulders. We know what it's like to have a loved one or a friend pour out their heart, ask us a question, and it throws you on your heels, if not on your back or on your face before God.

Life can get so tangled and difficult and painful and impossible, but we have the Lord to speak into these things. What a blessing, what a hope, what an expectation, and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor. Let's let Colossians 2.3 tell us a bit about how wonderful He is as Counselor.

In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, referring to Christ. Short verse, enormous revelation from heaven above. In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The implications of that just go out of sight. Let's think of the implications of that just as it pertains to the counseling ministry. Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor.

He's a wonder of a Counselor. There's no Counselor like the Lord Jesus Christ. Not even near.

No one even comes close. Think of these reasons to hold Him in such high honor. In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Wisdom and knowledge, that's what people are looking for when they're seeking counsel. When God is equipping us to counsel one another and those who come our way, we want to be growing in wisdom and knowledge. Knowledge, getting to know what we need to know.

That's what the Word of God is about. It lets us get to know what we need to know. But there's another issue.

Not just getting to know what we need to know, but the wisdom to rightly use what we are coming to know. They're both critical. And here we're told that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

What a Wonderful Counselor. How could you, you couldn't say that of anyone on earth. Now, the future or the past.

In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Oh, the vast treasury of the Lord God Almighty when it comes to knowledge and wisdom. And all these treasures are hidden in Christ.

Note the terminologies. In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. There's nothing missing for a Sigmund Freud to fill out.

Our Wonderful Counselor doesn't have all the treasures except those that Carl Jung might add. No way. Well, I read something about one of those that seemed somewhat right.

Well, if it's at all even near right, it's somewhat near incidentally or accidentally something God has already said. Someone told me once, I like to use some of those quotes from Carl Jung. And I said, well, why on earth? Well, it seems like it's kind of, you know, somewhat tangent to something God said in the word.

I said, so then why don't you use the word? You know it's right. You know it's right. Well, don't throw out the baby with the bathwater.

Well, that's pretty dirty bathwater. And if there's anything like a baby there, it's already here. And it's in clean, pure, spiritual water.

Pure milk of the word. Uncontaminated, uncompromised. In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

And notice that word hidden. In whom are hidden all the treasures. They're hidden there.

Now, that's an interesting word. They're treasures, but they're hidden treasures. Now, often when something is hidden, it's hidden so people can't find it.

That's absolutely not the use of the word here. How do we know that's not the use of the word? Because we're told right where the treasures are. It's not like it's a hide and seek game, you know.

We're told exactly where they are. This hiding is not so you can't find them. We're told where they are.

This hiding is so that you have to dig exactly where you're told they're hidden or you'll never find them. But we don't have to wonder. Well, where do you start looking for these hidden treasures? You start looking right where God says they're hidden.

It's kind of like hiding something for your kids and playing a game and then kind of, you know, letting them know where you hid them. This is a matter of exclusivity. They're all hidden in Christ.

So to access them, we must be willing to be digging daily into a deepening relationship with the wonderful counselor. You know, in the world's counsel, it's a big thing to stay professionally detached. Well, praise the Lord that we have a counselor who does not have that mindset.

The Lord Jesus is totally attached to our lives, His heart to our heart. He dwells in our hearts. He walks with us day by day.

He will never leave us nor forsake us. He has inscribed us on the palm of His hand. By the way, He used Roman nails to do that.

What a counselor. It's a wonder of a counselor. There's never been a counselor like this, who knew everything and had perfect wisdom to apply all of it.

When you talk about personal commitment, this wonderful counselor died for us. Paid an eternal debt we could never pay, the debt of sin. We owe God eternal death for our sin.

This counselor came to our rescue and we invited him into our heart and life. And he's remained there ever since and will right on through to glory. And all along the way, He wants to be our good shepherd.

He wants to be our wonderful counselor. He wants to be our guide and protector. And the Lord just wants us to dig into that relationship with Him.

Keep answering that first call. Come, follow me, He said. The cornerstone of biblical counseling.

The core of it all, the foundation underneath it all. The immeasurable scope and vision of it all is all anchored in this. The Lord is the counselor.

So many times through the years in teaching on this, folks have had their favorite approaches to counseling out in the world, and kind of hesitant to let go of them. Well, why not this? And why not that? And what about this approach? And this person? And this group? And this philosophy? Just take it back to this. And anything the world offers is lacking when you compare it to this.

Doesn't mean there aren't thoughtful people out there. Doesn't mean there aren't sacrificial people out there. Doesn't mean that God by His common grace to their love and compassion might not give a little encouragement and help, even when they're contradicting His word at times.

But the word does make this clear. All of that is other than this. And we'll never lose turning from the ways of the world to the ways of the Lord.

And the most ideal human counselor who does not have the Lord in His word, or who has the Lord and is mingling it, the word with humanistic speculation, is always less than what the Lord is calling us to. He is our wonderful counselor, and He is a wonder of a counselor. But there's another matter concerning what counseling is biblically.

Luke 9 23 raises the issue of the path of discipleship. In the Matthew gospel, Jesus said, Go make disciples of all the nations. When the Lord is sought to be our counselor, when the Lord is allowed to be our counselor, when the Lord is pointed to as the counselor, when the Lord is using us as an instrument of His counsel, it will always be related to the path of discipleship.

Why? Because Jesus came to this earth to call out disciples, you know, followers. Come follow me. A call to a personal relationship that is to undergird, dominate, and permeate our entire Christian pilgrimage here on earth.

That's what the Lord is aiming at. He's not aiming just at solving problems. He's not aiming at just restoring peace to troubled circumstance.

And He's certainly not aiming at being sure we always feel good about us. I mention those things because these are the things the counsel of the world aims at. Solving problems, restoring peace and stability, and the dominating influence of the world on counseling is let's focus on me and make me feel good about me.

The Lord as counselor, He's not aiming at these things. Oh, no one can solve problems like the Lord, but it's a result of Him at work. It's not the great goal.

It's just an outworking of us seeking Him. The Lord's aiming way higher than problem solver. He wants to be our Lord, our master, our life.

That's what disciples need. That's what they have in Christ. And He's not just there to comfort and bring peace, though there is no comforter like the Lord.

He's the Prince of Peace. But He's not just aiming at, oh, gonna get peace in every arena into the lives of this child of mine. He brings peace.

He brings comfort. But it's a result of Him being allowed to do what He wants to do. It's not a goal to aim at.

And He absolutely is not aiming at counseling us unto a I feel good about me counsel. That's contrary to discipleship. He's aiming at discipleship.

He came to take sin and death of the world upon Him at the cross so He could say, come follow me and give us victory over sin and death. And His great command to His followers as He was leaving this earth, go make disciples, not go solve problems, go restore order, or make people happy about themselves, or go church the unchurched. Go make disciples.

He came to do that. He instructed us to follow His example. When we're in a quest for counsel, the Lord wants to disciple us through whatever issue has stirred our hearts.

When others come to us for counsel, the Lord wants the counsel that we give have a discipleship impact upon their lives. What a blessing to know what God is aiming at every day in our lives, through every issue of our lives, and those who come our way. It's such a clarifying, simplifying revelation from the Word.

It's kind of a reminder how the church is getting so out of step with the purpose and message of the Lord Jesus Christ. He came to make disciples, to call out disciples. He said, go make disciples as He went home to glory.

And in many, many a church, you never hear the word discipleship. And the church's counsel even is taking on more and more of a kind of a self-centered, temporal, circumstantial flavor of the world. The counsel God wants to give us is life-giving, life-transforming, life-developing, heavenly life, holy life, Christ-like life, making us disciples, using us to help others in the same path.

How do we know if the counsel we receive or the counsel we give to others is permeated with discipleship truth? Well, you just look in the scriptures at places where discipleship is dealt with and then see if that is the content of the counsel we receive and the counsel we give to others. Luke 9.23, as mentioned, is a great place. There are other places.

We'll address some of them through the morning. Luke 9.23, Then He, Jesus, said to them all, there was a mass of humanity around Him, all the way from His disciples to His enemies, to the religious leaders, to the common folk, cross-section of humanity following the Lord Jesus. Then He said to them all, If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

That's discipleship. The call to discipleship was come follow Me. Now, if anyone were wondering, well, what's involved in that? Jesus is telling us.

If anyone desires to come after Me, answer the call to discipleship. Here's what's involved. Let him deny himself.

And it doesn't say deny things to himself. It says let him deny himself. To follow the Lord Jesus Christ, there has to be a ringing conviction in our heart that says no to self.

Lord, hearing Your gospel, hearing who You are, aware of my desperate need, I am saying no to myself. No longer is life about me, my will, my way, my wishes. My glory, my so-called wisdom.

I just renounce all of that, Lord. No to self. And then that same truth is intensified through a connection with the cross.

Let him deny himself and take up his cross. No to self, death to self. That's where discipleship begins with the Lord.

The cross, an instrument of judgment, an instrument of death, where the most vicious, guilty, dangerous, destructive criminals were given what human government there in the Roman Empire thought was inappropriate justice or judgment. And of course, ultimately, that cross is about the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Take up His cross, embracing His cross as our cross.

Lord Jesus, that cross You died on, that's what I deserve, that's what I should have gotten. But Lord, that's the cross now of my hope, because You died there on that cross for me. If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross.

No to self, death to self. Cling to the cross in agreement with God's judgment. That's where I should have gone.

But agree with the hope that's there. That's where Jesus went. He paid the debt and He rose victorious over sin and death.

Anyone transacting with God on that truth, Lord, I acknowledge that truth. I agree with that truth. I bow down before that truth.

I put my hope in all of that truth. They're ready to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Again, my mind runs to the day this dear Christian lady came up at one of our breaks in a teaching time like this and said, no to self, death to self.

Bob, what is left? And she just kind of threw her arms out in despair. I mean, her countenance was like, there's nothing left. No to self, death to self.

And the Lord prompted me to say to her, dear sister, by the look on your face and the tone in your voice and the gesture of your arms, I'm thinking you didn't hear the last few minutes of that session, did you? She said, I didn't get past no to self, death to self. I said, well, we talked about what's left. And what's left is everything you need for time and eternity, an abundant life now, an everlasting life with God in heaven above.

And it's all caught up in three simple words, and follow me. That's what's left. Nothing else is left.

Nothing else is needed. If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. That's God's counsel.

That's discipleship counsel. If we're counseling someone who has never started there, that's where our counsel is to start. What can we truly give people if we do not first offer them in the name of the Lord, everlasting life and forgiveness in Christ? Here it is.

This is repenting of our life and turning to embrace Jesus now as our new life. Many folks have said to me along the way, how do you counsel an unbeliever? I said, it's all caught up in one word, evangelism. Evangelism.

Yeah, but they're not coming for that. God brought them for that. They don't even know what they need.

If they don't have Christ. They're dead in trespasses and sins. They're blind.

They're hurting. We love them. We want to help.

Yeah, but they're having a problem with their next door neighbor. Oh, listen, they've got a far bigger problem to attend to. They've got a problem with their maker.

They need to be reconciled to God. That's where you start. What a gift to give to people.

They're coming with a problem. They're coming with struggle and chaos, maybe. Or they're coming saying, I feel pretty bummed out on me.

Can you help me feel better about me? And we know, we say, yes, you know, the Lord has hope and help for you. And it's more radical, the problem, and more radical, the remedy, than you even imagine. And sure, we listen with a loving heart.

And if they say, what do you think? I think we need to read Luke 9.23. That's what I think. Or if they go on and on, and the time is disappearing, and the door of opportunity is closing, we even might interject. Dear friend, if I might, I know there's more turmoil in your heart to share, but I think from just what I've heard, I have a word of hope for you from the Lord.

What's that? And we read Luke 9.23. And just help them understand the elements of it, and ask them, do you see how that applies to you? And if we've been praying while we were sharing, their heart's going to be convicted hearing that truth. They're going to have both a sense of, I need the Lord, and a sense of, the Lord is available. This is a call to follow Him.

The Lord is the wonderful counselor. And when He's allowed to be the counselor, He's always counseling unto discipleship. And here, the past is dealt with, the self-life.

Oh, and this is so different from the counsel of the world. So much of the world's counsel could be kind of caricatured in this. Well, everyone's problems are all related to low self-esteem.

So if you're going to help people get out of their discouragements, and their troubles, and their battles, you just help build up that level of esteem that they need to hold themselves in. I can understand the reasoning, but I compare it to the Word of God, and see the reasoning is greatly lacking. You know, we see people discouraged and down, and I'm so awful, and I can't do anything, and we want to kind of talk them out of it.

Come on, you're not as bad as you think you are. Come on, you can do more than you think you can. That's the world's counsel.

That's our counsel. You're way worse than you think you are. I believe all you're saying, but that's only part of the story.

And obviously, that couldn't maybe be put quite in those terms, but it's the truth. The truth is they need a Savior. They don't need a pep talk.

They need a Savior. They need to hear how great He is, how much He loves them, how thoroughly He can undertake on their behalf. And comfort, and peace, and forgiveness, and salvation will flow, and hope will now begin to grow toward Him.

And follow me. Oh, let's see now what the Lord can do with your life. And this pertains to a Christian too.

This is not only how you start out with the Lord, this is the attitude by which you press on after the Lord. See that word near the end? And take up His cross daily. You can not only think and pray together with someone here who's taking a step into the everlasting kingdom of God and out of the world of darkness, you can share this with a Christian who's in Christ, but walking according to the flesh, and is carnal of mind, self-centered in perspective, and needs to renounce the flesh, its ways, its so-called wisdom, its resources, its goals and purposes, its agendas, and just exhort them to cling to the cross and press on to follow the Lord.

In Him they're going to find abundance of life, hope and help, strength and wisdom, life itself. Follow the risen Christ. He'll take care of that dead life you had before you met Him.

And if you've met Him but you've just kind of been wandering on your own will and your own ways and your own work, humble yourself before the Lord. Repent of that. Cling to the cross and just follow the Lord today, tomorrow, the next day.

Following a risen Lord. That's what we offer people in counseling God's way. Not a better way to self-manage, but a way to renounce self and let God be God.

Let Christ be Lord. Let Him be our life. And follow me.

We're following a resurrected Lord. The Christian life, it is a resurrection life. It's initially found only in a resurrected Lord.

And it can only be developed more fully by following a resurrected Lord who gives resurrection life in abundance to those who seek Him. The world knows nothing of these things. The most trained professional in the mental care counseling field with the greatest sacrificial heart, if they do not know the Lord, if they are not ministering out of His Word, they do not have this to offer.

And if they have this to offer, they're going to look at their degrees in human wisdom as so anemic, so lacking. Oh, I wish I had a record. I wish I had a diary and album of every Christian I've talked to at seminars like this across the country and overseas for a couple decades now speaking on this subject.

Who've come to me after our studies in the Word and said, Oh, did God show me in His Word today that the way man trained me to counsel was so lacking. So many of them said, You know, God has reminded me in His Word something He's been convicting in my heart. I need to learn the new and living way of counseling His Word.

And many of those, oh God bless them, they're God's undercover agents. Let me see here, therapists. Oh, here's one not too far away.

They don't even know they're connecting with a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. All kinds of letters after their name. Oh, bigger thing than that.

The name that's in their heart and they're bearing much fruit God's way. God's way. What is counseling? The Lord is counselor.

And when He's allowed to counsel, He counsels unto discipleship. He lets us get to know Him and press on to know Him. And it changes our lives each step of the way.

God's way in counseling. Let's get into this before we take a break. Psalm 119.

God's way in counseling. That is the means that God uses to get His counsel into our lives and impact us by His counsel. God's way, God's means in counseling.

And our outline here has four lines of Scripture. God's way in counseling. That first line, through His Word.

That second line of Scripture, by His Spirit. That third line of Scripture, in prayerful seeking hearts. And then fourth line of Scripture, in the relational church life of His people.

Those are God's means. That's how God works His counsel into our hearts and lives. Let's go back over those.

That first line of Scripture, His fundamental means, the basis of all these other three and the outworking of these other three is through His Word. Psalm 119 verse 24. Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors.

This is God's way for us, His people. This is God's way for all in all the world. Come unto me all you who are weary and heavy laden, I'll give you rest.

He's not willing that any should perish, but all come to the knowledge of the truth. This is where God wants people to end up. Delighting in His testimonies.

The Word of God. These are the testimonies of God. Who He is, what He's done, what He can do.

God wants us delighting in these. Getting into them, getting them into us. Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors.

God is calling us to drink at the fountain of living water, the Word of God. He wants it to become a joy to our hearts and lives. Delighting in His testimonies.

And in that setting, His testimonies are our counselors. Well, that links perfectly with Isaiah 9.6. Jesus, our Lord, is our wonderful counselor. And He wants to counsel us through His Word.

This is the Word of the Lord. This is the heart and mind of the Lord God Almighty and Jesus, our Lord and Savior. God counsels people through His Word.

That's pretty straightforward, isn't it? Someone seeking counsel, coming to someone who has counsel, and the one who has counsel, putting it into words. That's even in that rudimentary picture, the way those in the world counsel. Troubled lives come to human experts, and they give a word.

Though I must say, a lot of them are trained not to give any definitive word. One seeking counsel comes to the expert, pours out a little bit of the contemporary situation, and the expert says, Well, what do you think about that? And the troubled soul shares more. And then the expert says, Well, what would you like to do about that? And the troubled soul shares more.

And the expert says, Wow, I think you ought to tell me more about your history. You're pretty messed up. Professionally speaking, of course.

Well, this way of God is as high above that as the heavens are above the earth. But it does come down to words. I know people make a great deal about whether they're visual or auditory, and how long they can concentrate.

You know what? We're talking flesh, evaluating flesh. God sent forth His Word, gave it to the prophets and apostles of old, and then He sent forth the embodiment of all that, and called Him the Word, John 1. And the Word went about speaking, and then everything He was doing matched what He was speaking. What a wonderful counsel.

That's the kind of life we're to live. God can counsel us in that. But it's anchored in His Word.

And of course, the Word became flesh, and the Word is to be fleshed out in us. Not carnally speaking, but humanly speaking. As humanity, the Word is to become the life we live.

And counsel is designed to be an instrumental help in that process. Verse 24, Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors. Same psalm, verse 105.

Concerning the Word in counseling. Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. This is the very character of the Word.

This is what the Word does when it's taken into lives, when it's ministered to lives. God's Word becomes a lamp to people's feet and a light to their path. What a huge ministry this is in the arena of counseling.

People with struggles and yearnings and lacks and needs. And even above all, the need of the Lord and those who even know it, and they're seeking the Lord. They go in the Word, and it's a lamp to their feet.

In other words, the Word of God shines out like a lamp does, lighting up where your feet are. In other words, the Word God uses to show us where we are in life, with Him. But not only the Word showing us where we are, but showing us where the Lord wants to lead us.

A light to my path. We need those ministries of the Word. Shining light on where we are.

Okay, this is the situation. Now the question, Lord, where and how do you want to lead? Well, the Word, as we're in it and ministering and praying in it, sharing with one another, becomes a light to our path. Verse 130, the entrance of your words gives light.

It gives understanding to the simple. Oh, I love that moment in sharing with counsel-seeking hearts, when there's an opportunity to share, either in reading or in summary statement, a part or pieces of the Word of God. What happens then is the Word of the Lord is entering in.

And the entrance of your words gives light. So many times, folks motivated to seek counsel, it's because there's sort of a darkened circumstance. It's like a foreboding cloud of burden or difficulty or impossibility or perplexity just over everything.

And how to go on and how to attend to things can be excruciating and painful. It's like being in a dark room and knowing you needed to get across it, needed to move. But every step you take, you're cracking your shins and bumping your head, you know.

What's needed? Light. Nothing deals with darkness except light. Turning to the One who is the light, the light of the world, shining into our lives, making us instrumentally the light of the world for others in His name.

The entrance of your words gives light. Oh, when people come to us for help and counsel, to have this prayerful desire, Lord, as soon as I can, as wisely as I can, let me get into the Word. A verse to read, a phrase to recall, a summary to suggest.

Because then the Lord is speaking right into the situation, shining His light. And it gives understanding to the simple. One reason the very learned of the world, trained in all the theories of man, scoff at or neglect the Bible is they're unwilling to be categorized by God as simple ones.

You know, naive ones, needy ones. Well, the entrance of God's Word gives light. It gives understanding to the simple.

Those are willing to say, Lord, life is beyond my capacity, especially right now and especially in this situation. I don't understand the way I need to. Lord, by Your Word, give understanding.

The Word's designed to do that. It's able to do that. That's why we must minister it as our counsel.

Let's look at one more. John 17, 17. John 17, 17.

What's God's way in counsel? What is His means in applying His counsel to our life? Fundamentally, initially, always, comprehensively, it's through His Word. Like John 17, 17. Jesus prayed, sanctify them by Your truth.

Your Word is truth. Here Jesus is praying for believers. Oh, how we who follow Christ need to be sanctified, to be set apart unto Him.

In the world, yes, but not of the world. Not seeking the things of this earth, but seeking the things above. Sanctified, set apart more and more to the pleasure of God, the will of God, the work of God, the glory of God.

This is part of the need of every person. It's why we're here upon the earth, to learn about Him and find out that living with Him and for Him and through Him and His work in us is why we're created. And what is it that brings that process to pass? Sanctify them by Your truth.

Your Word is truth. The truth of the Word of God has sanctifying power in it. It reshapes.

It changes lives. It makes people, as they embrace it, more and more in line with the will and the work and the purposes and the glory of God. When people come to us for help, this is what they need.

When we are hurting and needy and seeking counsel, I need to be reminded of this. Oh, I need to just get in the Word and ask God to unleash its sanctifying, shaping, transforming, setting apart power in my heart and mind. The Lord is the wonderful counselor.

He counsels under discipleship. That's what counseling is from God's perspective. And then how does He get that into people's lives? What is His way in counseling? It is primarily and continuing always in and through His Word.

Let's pray together. Lord, work these truths deep into our hearts and minds, renewing, reshaping our minds, and bringing us Your counsel and making us instruments of Your counsel, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/SYdLEzCkQIA.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/bob-hoekstra/counseling-gods-way-leadership-seminar-part-1/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net